



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

TAJIKISTAN

FIRST PERSON

A Woman Joins Fight Against TB

A villager decides to speak up about TB after her husband and daughter got cured.



“Now I know that TB is a curable disease. The brightest examples are my husband and my daughter!”

Zulfia, wife and mother of former TB patients.

Photo: Project HOPE

When Zulfia's husband Takhir became sick with tuberculosis (TB), the family was grief-stricken. He was their only breadwinner, and they felt that he could not afford to medical treatment. But when one morning Takhir could not even get up and go to work, Zulfia ran to the doctor, and Takhir was hospitalized. Most of the medicines turned out to be free of charge, and the family did not have to pay for his laboratory tests either. With proper care, Takhir's condition improved, he returned home and finished treatment under the direct observation of a local doctor. Even though he was now well, the family was ashamed of the disease and was hiding it from the neighbors and relatives. In Tajikistan, TB is stigmatized and families with TB patients are subjected to condemnation.

A few months later, the family faced yet another blow. Their fifteen-year old daughter Dilya kept coughing, and the doctor suspected TB as well. The news disturbed the family: if the village found out about her disease, nobody will want to marry a young girl with a history of tuberculosis. Zulfia decided to keep her daughter's sickness in secret and cure her with medicines they had at home. The girl's condition worsened, she began bleeding from her lungs, and was urgently hospitalized. After two months in hospital, she returned home to

complete her treatment under doctor's supervision and recovered from TB.

Zulfia is grateful to have her daughter healthy and has decided to speak about her disease. «When I saw my child dying, I realized I could lose her forever! No matter if she gets married - I need her!» says Zulfia. She often visits her neighbors and relatives, and if she sees someone ill or coughing, she advises them to see a doctor. She also wants to tell her neighbors that they should not be scared to get treatment: “Now I know that TB is a curable disease. The brightest examples are my husband and my daughter! People believe me because they know what I've been through.”

USAID and its grantee Project Hope are working helped Tajikistan to improve the quality of TB diagnosis and treatment, provide access to quality TB drugs, and reduce stigma among the general population towards TB patients. USAID's comprehensive TB control program, through pilot activities, is benefiting approximately 26% of Tajikistan's population.